

立法會
Legislative Council

LC Paper No. CB(2)1721/13-14
(These minutes have been
seen by the Administration)

Ref : CB2/PL/WS

Panel on Welfare Services

Minutes of meeting
held on Monday, 10 February 2014, at 10:45 am
in Conference Room 1 of the Legislative Council Complex

Members present : Hon CHAN Yuen-han, SBS, JP (Chairman)
Hon CHEUNG Kwok-che (Deputy Chairman)
Hon Albert HO Chun-yan
Hon LEUNG Yiu-chung
Hon TAM Yiu-chung, GBS, JP
Hon Frederick FUNG Kin-kee, SBS, JP
Hon Ronny TONG Ka-wah, SC
Dr Hon LEUNG Ka-lau
Hon Alan LEONG Kah-kit, SC
Hon LEUNG Kwok-hung
Hon WONG Yuk-man
Hon Frankie YICK Chi-ming
Hon Gary FAN Kwok-wai
Hon CHAN Chi-chuen
Hon CHAN Han-pan
Hon LEUNG Che-cheung, BBS, MH, JP
Dr Hon KWOK Ka-ki
Dr Hon Fernando CHEUNG Chiu-hung
Dr Hon Helena WONG Pik-wan
Hon POON Siu-ping, BBS, MH
Hon TANG Ka-piu

Member attending : Hon Tony TSE Wai-chuen

**Public Officers : Item III
attending**

Miss SHEA Wing-man
Principal Assistant Secretary for Labour and Welfare
(Welfare) 1
Labour and Welfare Bureau

Mr KOK Che-leung
Assistant Director of Social Welfare (Subventions)
Social Welfare Department

Miss Ophelia WONG, JP
Deputy Director/District
Planning Department

Items III and IV

Miss Annie TAM, JP
Permanent Secretary for Labour and Welfare
Labour and Welfare Bureau

Mr LAM Ka-tai
Deputy Director of Social Welfare (Services)
Social Welfare Department

Item IV

Mrs Elina CHAN
Principal Assistant Secretary for Labour and Welfare
(Welfare) 3
Labour and Welfare Bureau

Miss Cecilla LI
Assistant Director of Social Welfare (Elderly)
Social Welfare Department

**Clerk in
attendance** : Mr Colin CHUI
Chief Council Secretary (2) 4

**Staff in
attendance** : Ms Catherina YU
Senior Council Secretary (2) 4

Miss Maggie CHIU
Legislative Assistant (2) 4

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I. Information paper(s) issued since the last meeting

[LC Paper Nos. CB(2)719/13-14(01), CB(2)748/13-14(01), CB(2)797/13-14(01) and CB(2)798/13-14(01)]

Members noted that the following papers had been issued since the last meeting –

- (a) submission from 爭取資助院舍聯席 requesting the Panel to follow up matters relating to carers allowance [LC Paper No. CB(2)719/13-14(01)];
- (b) letter dated 20 January 2014 from Dr Hon Helena WONG suggesting that the Panel fix a date for discussing "Provision of child care services and after school care services", and receiving views from deputations [LC Paper No. CB(2)748/13-14(01)];
- (c) referral memorandum from Legislative Council Members meeting with the Wong Tai Sin District Council members on 5 December 2013 concerning the new policy on "Universal Accessibility" [LC Paper No. CB(2)797/13-14(01)]; and
- (d) letter dated 21 January 2014 from Hon TANG Ka-piu requesting the Administration to clarify the calculation method of Comprehensive Social Security Assistance payments, which had been disseminated through the Internet and mobile communication applications [LC Paper No. CB(2)798/13-14(01)].

II. Items for discussion at the next meeting

[LC Paper Nos. CB(2)799/13-14(01) and (02)]

2. Members noted that the Administration had proposed to discuss at the next meeting scheduled for 10 March 2014 the following items –

- (a) Upgrading the post of Commissioner for Rehabilitation and strengthening the directorate manpower of the Rehabilitation Team of the Labour and Welfare Bureau; and

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- (b) Creation of one time-limited supernumerary post of Administrative Officer Staff Grade C (D2) in the Labour and Welfare Bureau.

3. The Chairman suggested including "Programmes and initiatives relating to the purview of the Panel on Welfare Services set out in the 2014-2015 Budget" in the agenda of the next meeting. Members agreed.

III. Special scheme on privately owned sites for welfare uses

[LC Paper No. CB(2)799/13-14(03)]

4. The Chairman drew members' attention to Rule 83A of the Rules of Procedures regarding personal pecuniary interest to be disclosed. She reminded members to declare interests in the matter under discussion, if any.

5. At the invitation of the Chairman, Permanent Secretary for Labour and Welfare ("PS(LW)") briefed members on the progress of implementing the special scheme on privately owned sites for welfare uses ("the Special Scheme") and the Administration's proposal to seek the approval of the Finance Committee ("FC") to transfer \$10 billion to the Lotteries Fund ("LF") to ensure the availability of sufficient resources to implement the feasible projects under the Special Scheme.

Completion time of projects

6. While supporting the Special Scheme, Mr Tony TSE expressed concern about the burden on the construction industry if too many projects were implemented at the same time. To minimize the impact, the implementation of the projects under the Special Scheme should be better planned. He asked whether the Administration had set any target for the number of projects to be launched in a year under the Special Scheme.

7. Mr TANG Ka-piu and Mr POON Siu-ping enquired about the timetable for the provision of the additional service places under the Special Scheme. PS(LW) responded that five projects were expected to be completed in 2017-2018 barring unforeseen circumstances. As for the remaining preliminary proposals, they were expected to be completed in phases after 2017-2018, depending on their technical feasibilities.

8. Considering that the in-situ expansion and redevelopment projects under the Special Scheme might affect the existing residential care services

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("RCS") provided by the 40 applicant organizations, Mr TANG Ka-piu expressed concern about the pressure on other RCS providers if a large number of affected residents were required to be rehoused. He sought information on the number of residential care home ("RCH") places being provided by these applicant organizations.

9. PS(LW) responded that the Administration would consider exercising its discretion to approve the use of LF to pay for the decanting costs involved if an applicant organization needed to relocate the existing welfare services to other premises pending the development or redevelopment of the site. The applicant organizations proposing more than one project under the Special Scheme would stagger the construction schedules and carry out the redevelopment projects by phases to maintain their services. As the applicant organizations would need to make their own rehousing arrangement for the affected RCH residents, the Administration did not have information on the number of RCH places they were currently providing that would need the decanting arrangement.

10. The Chairman and Mr LEUNG Yiu-chung said that instead of relying solely on the applicant organizations to solve the problems arising from redevelopment including the decanting arrangements for the affected RCH residents, the Administration should coordinate relevant parties' efforts in dealing with the problems and assist these organizations. PS(LW) responded that a working group comprising representatives of relevant bureau/departments had been formed to help coordinate action on the Special Scheme. The Administration had also held several meetings with the Hong Kong Council of Social Service and the applicant organizations to discuss the relevant co-ordination work.

Ratio of subvented to self-financing services under the Special Scheme

11. Mr TANG Ka-piu said that the sustained provision of the services, particularly for RCS for the elderly, by the applicant organizations was important. He sought information on the provision of subsidized RCS under the Special Scheme.

12. While expressing support for the Special Scheme, Dr Fernando CHEUNG was of the view that the Special Scheme should aim at providing subsidized services. In this connection, he requested the Administration to provide the following information –

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- (a) the numbers of new development, redevelopment and in-situ expansion projects proposed by the applicant organizations under the Special Scheme;

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- (b) the location, the total floor area, and the floor area allocated for different purposes (i.e. for subvented and self-financing services, office use, etc.) of each of these projects;
- (c) the types and scale of the services to be provided by these projects; and
- (d) the estimated construction completion date of these projects.

13. PS(LW) responded that the Administration was in the course of discussing the preliminary proposals with the applicant organizations. The proposed numbers of places for RCS and day care services for the elderly were 6 958 and 2 009 respectively. As for RCS and day care services for person with disabilities, the numbers of places proposed were 2 157 and 2 428 respectively. The number of places proposed for pre-school rehabilitation services was 3 842. As technical feasibility studies had not been conducted in respect of some proposals and planning permissions from the Town Planning Board might be required for some of these proposals, the number of service places to be provided was subject to changes.

14. Regarding the proportion of subvented services and self-financing services to be provided under the Special Scheme, PS(LW) said that it would depend on the needs for the respective services. The Administration would liaise with the applicant organizations in this regard. She added that the applicant organizations could provide some ancillary welfare facilities at their sites subject to the agreement of Social Welfare Department ("SWD") but this should not be done at the expense of the provision of the mainstream welfare facilities.

15. Mr LEUNG Yiu-chung said that as the projects would be funded by LF, the Administration should provide guidelines to the applicants regarding the provision of subvented and self-financing services under the Special Scheme. At Mr LEUNG's request, the Administration would provide the Panel with the relevant guidelines.

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Scale and types of services

16. Dr KWOK Ka-ki and Mr LEUNG Kwok-hung said that since RCS was in the greatest demand among the social welfare services, the applicant organizations should not be at liberty to decide on the types of services and the proportion of subvented and self-financing RCS to be provided under

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the Special Scheme. Dr KWOK Ka-ki said that as the Administration lacked a mechanism to monitor self-financing services, there were cases that non-governmental organizations ("NGOs") had spent the LF grants on hiring senior management staff with high salaries which might not be necessary. Besides, many persons who were in need of RCS might not be able to afford self-financing homes. He considered that the Administration should give steer to the applicant organizations on service development including the types of service and the provision timeframe.

17. PS(LW) responded that the applicant organizations were required to provide the services prescribed by the Administration. The Special Scheme would provide a basis for planning for welfare services in the medium to long term. The Administration was aware that the additional service places provided under the Special Scheme might not be adequate to meet the demand fully, and would endeavor to secure more Government sites to meet the service needs.

18. Taking into account the substantial financial resources injected into the Special Scheme, Dr KWOK Ka-ki said that the applicant organizations should commit a longer or even permanent service period to ensure the continuous provision of the agreed services. Mr LEUNG Kwok-hung said that the Administration should put in place a mechanism to prevent the applicant organizations from changing the service types at will.

19. PS(LW) said that the applicant organizations must comply with the agreement they would reach with SWD under the Special Scheme as far as service period was concerned. They were required to provide the type of services as stated in their proposals and any changes to the types of services were subject to SWD's approval. In some cases, the services to be provided at a site were governed by the land lease of the lot concerned. Deputy Director of Social Welfare (Services) supplemented that if an applicant organization intended to provide a type of service which was not prescribed in the land lease, it needed to apply for land lease modification. The service period of some LF-funded self-financing welfare facilities was far beyond LF's requirements.

20. Mr Frankie YICK said that as the needs for welfare services might change with time, the Administration should allow flexibility on the types of services to be provided. SWD should consider granting approval to other types of services having regard to the needs.

21. Mr TAM Yiu-chung welcomed the Administration's policies to facilitate the use of privately owned sites for welfare uses and the Special

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Scheme was worth pursuing although it would create additional work for the applicant organizations and the Administration. In view of the positive response from the social welfare sector to the Special Scheme, Mr LEUNG Che-cheung hoped that the Administration would launch similar schemes in the future.

22. Referring to Annex 2 to the Administration's paper, Mr TAM Yiu-chung said that the Administration should provide information regarding the number of projects and the number of NGOs involved in the provision of services places in each district.

23. PS(LW) responded that the figures in Annex 2 to the Administration's paper were rough estimation calculated by the applicant organizations and might be subject to changes after discussion of details between the Administration and the applicant organizations.

24. Mr TAM Yiu-chung enquired about whether the site in Lam Tei of Tuen Mun donated by a local developer to the Pok Oi Hospital for the provision of RCS was one of the projects under the Special Scheme. PS(LW) said that the Pok Oi Hospital had submitted a proposal under the Special Scheme to construct at the site an RCH for the elderly.

25. In response to Mr LEUNG Che-cheung's enquiry about the number of additional service places under the Special Scheme, PS(LW) said that based on the rough estimation of the applicant organizations, there would be a net increase of about 17 000 service places if all the proposals received could be implemented smoothly.

Funding arrangements

26. Mr Tony TSE wondered whether the costs of some projects under the Special Scheme might go up given the large amount of available funding (i.e. \$20 billion). He sought information on the principles for selecting the proposals.

27. PS(LW) responded that the Administration would consider all the 60 odd proposals received as the proposed facilities were those in great demand currently or in the foreseeable future. The proposals were at different planning stages and were expected to proceed at different paces in the next five to 10 years and beyond. In order not to affect other LF projects, the Administration had proposed the transfer of \$10 billion to LF for the Special Scheme and other projects within the remit of LF. Mr Tony TSE said that the Administration should have a rough estimation of

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how the \$20 billion would be allocated over the next 10 years. PS(LW) said that no time limit had been set for using up the \$20 billion.

28. In response to Mr POON Siu-ping's enquiry about the funding arrangements relating to the Special Scheme, PS(LW) said the \$10 billion proposed to be transferred to LF would not be earmarked for the projects under the Special Scheme only. The current closing balance of LF was around \$10 billion. In the past five years (2008-2009 to 2012-2013), the average revenue and average expenditure of LF amounted to about \$1.6 billion and \$800 million per year respectively. Its income and expenditure in the future would be subject to the progress of projects implemented/planned and the actual revenue. To avoid affecting other LF projects, the proposed transfer of fund was to secure sufficient resources to implement the feasible projects under the Special Scheme and other projects within the remit of LF.

29. Given the wide scope of the projects to be funded by LF, the Deputy Chairman opined that the proposed transfer of \$10 billion would not be adequate to carry out all the projects under the Special Scheme.

Manpower planning

30. Mr Tony TSE said that some civil servants and staff unions had expressed their worries about the workload and manpower shortage problems arising from the Special Scheme. PS(LW) responded that SWD would mainly deploy existing staff to assess the applications submitted by the NGOs under the Special Scheme. Other government departments would also provide manpower support as far as practicable.

31. Mr POON Siu-ping sought information on the Administration's assessment of the manpower required for the additional services brought about by the Special Scheme and the corresponding staffing arrangements. Mr LEUNG Che-cheung expressed grave concern that there would not be adequate manpower supply to cater for the additional services to be provided under the Special Scheme. The Deputy Chairman said that in order to have suitable manpower planning, it was pivotal to know in advance the proportion of subvented and self-financing services places to be provided under the Special Scheme.

32. Mr Frederick FUNG said that given the lead time required for training up care workers, the Administration should plan ahead with respect to training and development to ensure that there would be sufficient manpower supply for the additional services.

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33. Mr Frankie YICK was of the view that to alleviate manpower shortage in the welfare sector, the Administration should consider importing labour on a short-term basis.

34. PS(LW) responded that the applicant organizations were required to make provisions for manpower requirements for their projects and could consider providing training facilities on their sites if appropriate and feasible. The Administration would follow up manpower resources training in the welfare sector as appropriate. The Administration would also make suitable arrangements to support manpower planning in response to the additional service places to be provided under and outside the Special Scheme. SWD would reflect to the Education Bureau and universities on the provision of training programmes if necessary. To encourage the younger generation to join the care service sector, the Administration had launched a scheme under which young people were recruited to provide care services at residential care homes for the elderly and were provided with training subsidies.

35. The Chairman said that unleashing women workforce could help mitigate manpower shortage in the welfare sector. The Administration should consider requesting applicant organizations to provide child care facilities to facilitate the release of women labour force.

36. PS(LW) responded that while the Administration welcomed the applicant organizations to incorporate child care facilities at the project sites to facilitate women employment, the number of elderly and/or rehabilitation service places to be provided under the Special Scheme should not be affected. The Administration would offer assistance to the applicant organizations which were interested to incorporate child care facilities on their sites under the Special Scheme as far as practicable.

37. The Chairman said that the joint efforts of different government departments in taking forward the Special Scheme was a step forward in addressing the inadequate facilities for elderly and rehabilitation services. The Administration should plan ahead for the required manpower resources. She hoped that PS(LW) would seek the views of the Chief Secretary for Administration on unleashing women workforce.

Interface with other social welfare services

38. The Deputy Chairman said that the Administration should amalgamate its social welfare services with those provided under the Special Scheme and draw up a comprehensive plan on the supply and

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demand of these services. A committee should be set up to follow up how the applicant organizations and the Administration could complement each other in the provision of services.

39. Mr LEUNG Yiu-chung said that the Special Scheme should not affect the implementation of other social welfare facilities development projects and the number of service places to be provided by the Administration. Expressing concern that no day care service places would be provided in some districts under the Special Scheme, the Deputy Chairman and Mr LEUNG Yiu-chung considered it necessary for the Administration to formulate a long-term and holistic plan to fill the gaps of such services. In planning for the welfare service facilities, the Administration should ensure that there would be an increase in the supply of service places in each district, and avoid excessive supply in some districts and undersupply in others.

40. PS(LW) responded that the Elderly Commission ("EC") would prepare an elderly services programme plan. In this connection, EC would take into account, among others, the service places to be provided under the Special Scheme and other service places being contemplated by the Government to meet the service demand. Similarly, the Administration would also consult the Rehabilitation Advisory Committee ("RAC") on the provision of rehabilitation services. The Administration would follow up on the advice to be given by EC and RAC.

Impact on environment and transport

41. Mr Frederick FUNG said that in the light of the increased traffic and pedestrian flow arising from the additional services to be provided under the Special Scheme, the Administration should assess the need for transport facilities and the impact on the environment before approving the proposals. Deputy Director/District responded that the Planning Department and other relevant government departments would examine the proposals carefully to ensure that they would not have adverse impact on the districts concerned. The relevant government departments would liaise with the applicant organizations to make sure that their proposals would be compatible with surrounding land uses and would not impose undue burden on the infrastructure and road network. If amendment(s) to the outline zoning plan or planning permission from the Town Planning Board was required to take the project forward, the Planning Department would make the necessary amendment and conduct public consultation in accordance with the provision of the Town Planning Ordinance. The projects could only proceed with community support.

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Follow-up action

42. Dr Fernando CHEUNG reiterated his grave concern about the proportion of subvented and self-financing services under the Special Scheme. In his view, a cap on the self-financing portion should be imposed to ensure that public money was spent in public interest. Dr CHEUNG and Mr LEUNG Kwok-hung said that the Administration should provide members with more information regarding the projects under the Special Scheme to facilitate members' consideration of the proposal at the relevant FC meeting. Dr CHEUNG requested the Administration to provide the information requested by members before submitting the relevant proposal to FC.

(Post-meeting note: The Administration provided members with the requisite information mentioned in paragraphs 12 and 15 above on 20 February 2014 vide LC Paper No. CB(2)927/13-14(01)).

43. PS(LW) responded that LF had always been prudent in the granting of funds. LF grants would only be provided to the applicant organizations for approved services in phases. For projects involving additional recurrent financial implications exceeding \$10 million, the Government would, according to the established administrative arrangement, submit the relevant projects to FC for approval.

44. In response to the Chairman's invitation of views, members present supported in principle the submission to FC of the proposal to transfer \$10 billion funds to LF.

IV. Pilot scheme on the provision of living allowance to carers of the elderly from low income families

[LC Paper Nos. CB(2)799/13-14(04) to (05)]

45. At the invitation of the Chairman, PS(LW) briefed members on the proposed features of the pilot scheme on living allowance for carers of the elderly persons from low income families ("the Pilot Scheme").

Additional resources for service delivery agents

46. While expressing support for the Pilot Scheme, Mr Gary FAN was concerned that if no additional resources were allocated to service delivery agents (i.e. District Elderly Community Centres ("DECCs") and

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Neighbourhood Elderly Centres ("NECs")) to cope with the extra workload brought about by the Pilot Scheme, the Pilot Scheme might not be easy to administer to enable an early start. He enquired whether the Administration would include the additional resources required by the service delivery agents in the relevant funding proposal.

47. The Deputy Chairman was wary of the service capacity of the service delivery agents as they would not be given additional manpower for providing support services for carers under the Pilot Scheme. In order not to overload them, the Administration should limit the number of carers to be served by a DECC or NEC and adjust the services to be provided by the DECC or NEC concerned under the Funding and Service Agreements ("FSAs"). The Administration should also make withdrawal arrangements for the service delivery agents when the scheme had become a regular programme.

48. PS(LW) responded that the Pilot Scheme would be funded by the Community Care Fund ("CCF") and a service fee, on a per-carer basis, might be provided by the Administration through CCF to the service delivery agents for their service so that the arrangements under the Lump Sum Grant Subvention System would not be affected. The Administration would discuss with the service delivery agents the level of service fee.

(The Deputy Chairman took the chair in the temporary absence of the Chairman.)

Maintaining the provision of subsidized community care service

49. Dr Fernando CHEUNG criticized that the proposed requirements of the Pilot Scheme were too harsh. The Administration had suggested that if an elderly person was being taken care of by a carer at home, his/her service provider might recommend less personal support services or might not recommend any full-time day care services. Such proposal ran counter to the Administration's objective of enabling the elderly to remain members of the community for as long as possible. In his view, home care services and subsidized community care services should complement each other so that there would not be any service gaps for the needy elderly. Opining that the Administration lacked the concept of long-term care in designing the Pilot Scheme, he urged the Administration to set afresh the parameters of the Pilot Scheme.

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"Double benefit" restriction

50. Mr TANG Ka-piu and Mr Albert HO enquired about the reasons why the recipients of carer allowance could not at the same time receive Comprehensive Social Security Assistance ("CSSA") or Old Age Living Allowance ("OALA") (hereinafter referred to as "doubled benefit" restriction). The Deputy Chairman said that the "double benefit" restriction would force the carers to give up certain financial assistance.

51. PS(LW) responded that as OALA was a form of financial assistance aiming to supplement the living expenses of eligible needy elderly and was of a similar nature vis-à-vis the carer allowance, recipients of carer allowance should not at the same time receive OALA.

52. Mr TANG Ka-piu worried that, according to the Administration's rationale, recipients of carer allowance might also not be eligible for work incentive transport subsidy ("WITS") and low-income working family allowance ("LIFA"). PS(LW) said that due consideration would be given to the interface of the Pilot Scheme with the proposed LIFA and the WITS Scheme.

53. Mr TANG Ka-piu reiterated his concern that disallowing the needy to receive different kinds of financial assistance at the same time would become a principle of the Administration's financial management.

54. Mr LEUNG Kwok-hung said that it was the Administration's responsibility to meet the elderly's need for care services and carers had, in effect, alleviated the Administration's burden in this regard. In his view, all carers should be entitled to the allowance and yet the Administration had imposed unfavourable conditions to prevent many carers from benefiting from the Pilot Scheme. The hourly rate of the allowance proposed for carers was even lower than the statutory minimum wage rate, and worse still, recipients of the carer allowance were not allowed to receive CSSA or OALA. He called on the Administration to increase the amount of allowance and do away with the "double benefit" restriction.

55. Mr LEUNG Yiu-chung said that the proposed conditions and eligibility criteria for the Pilot Scheme had made many carers not eligible for the allowance. The parameters should be relaxed when the scheme had become a regular programme. He also suggested that the pilot period should be shortened to one year. Mr TANG Ka-piu suggested that the Administration produce a manual for carers.

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(The Chairman took the chair at this juncture.)

56. The Chairman said that the "double benefit" restriction was unacceptable and the Pilot Scheme had too many restrictions. If "double benefit" restriction was due to financial constraints, the Government should explore new sources of income by introducing new taxes, such as capital gains tax.

57. PS(LW) responded that an evaluation would be conducted during the two-year pilot period to assess the implications and effectiveness of the Pilot Scheme. As the Pilot Scheme would be launched under CCF, the Administration had proposed to largely follow the prevailing practices in other CCF projects when designing some of the parameters of the Pilot Scheme. The Administration would review these parameters in the context of the evaluation and consider making changes to the parameters, if necessary, during the two-year pilot period.

Quota of eligible carers

58. Mr CHAN Chi-chuen, Dr Fernando CHEUNG and Mr Albert HO were of the view that the scale of the Pilot Scheme should be expanded to benefit more carers. Mr LEUNG Kwok-hung called on the Administration to remove the ceiling on the number of beneficiaries of carer allowance.

59. Mr POON Siu-ping said that the Administration should collect information during the pilot period to facilitate its estimation of the number of carers eligible for the allowance. He suggested that no cap should be imposed on the number of beneficiaries when the scheme was launched after the pilot period.

60. PS(LW) responded that whether changes to the parameters of the Pilot Scheme should be made would depend on the outcome of the review of the Pilot Scheme.

Allowance for carers of persons with disabilities and carers of persons with chronic illness

61. Mr LEUNG Yiu-chung expressed concern about the timetable for the provision of allowance to carers of persons with disabilities and carers of persons with chronic illness.

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62. Dr Fernando CHEUNG said that given the extent of care required by persons with disabilities and persons with chronic illness, their carers were also under great stress and in need of support. The Administration should not exclude these carers from the Pilot Scheme. The Chairman shared the view that carers of persons with disabilities should also be eligible for the allowance as many persons with disabilities were in great need for carers.

63. PS(LW) responded that the Administration would consider the way forward on the provision of allowance for carers of persons with disabilities and carers of persons with chronic illness having regard to the experience gained from the Pilot Scheme.

64. Mr LEUNG Yiu-chung said that the Administration should commit in principle the provision of allowance for carers of persons with disabilities and carers of persons with chronic illness.

Income assessment

65. Mr CHAN Chi-chuen said that the allowance was only a small amount of financial supplement for carers from low-income families and would not have any adverse impact on the sense of family obligation or virtual of filial piety. A lenient approach should therefore be adopted in providing the allowance. The Administration should consider relaxing the income limit or removing the income assessment requirement in the long run.

66. PS(LW) responded that unlike some of the carer allowance schemes in other places, the conditions proposed for the Pilot Scheme were more lenient. The Pilot Scheme did not require that a carer must be a family member of the elderly person being taken care of. Neither did the elderly person concerned need to sign and confirm the hours of care-giving. The proposed minimum hours of care-giving under the Pilot Scheme would also be less than those of similar schemes in the United Kingdom ("UK") and Australia. She further said that many other places including UK, Canada and some states in the United States of America had also adopted a means-test for carer allowance schemes. To enable effective use of limited public resources, the Administration considered that carers under the Pilot Scheme should be subject to income assessment.

Amount of the allowance

67. In response to Mr CHAN Chi-chuen's enquiry about the maximum allowance a carer could claim per month, PS(LW) said that the amount of

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allowance was proposed to be set at \$2,000 per month for each eligible carer. For each of those carers who took care of more than one elderly person at the same time might claim up to \$4,000 per month, subject to the hours of care-giving being no less than 120 hours per month.

68. In response to Mr POON Siu-ping's enquiry about the allowance arrangements for two carers giving care to the same elderly person, PS(LW) said that the Pilot Scheme had not provided for such scenario.

69. Mr POON Siu-ping sought information regarding the Administration's assessment of whether the proposed level of allowance would weaken the sense of family obligation or diminish the virtual of filial piety. PS(LW) responded that according to the information provided by the University of Hong Kong, no study in this regard had been conducted in Asia. She hoped that the experience gained from the Pilot Scheme would enlighten the Administration on this aspect.

Launching a regular scheme on allowance for carers

70. Mr LEUNG Kwok-hung said that instead of launching the scheme on a pilot basis, the Administration should regularize the scheme and conduct a review two years after its implementation.

71. Mr Albert HO said that the Administration's thinking that providing allowance for carers would weaken the sense of family obligation and diminish the virtual of filial piety was wrong. He considered pilot run for the scheme unnecessary having regard to the extensive discussion in the community on the subject matter. He urged the Administration to implement a carer allowance scheme on a regular basis swiftly.

Verification of hours of care-giving

72. Mr Albert HO said that as many carers were family members of the elderly persons being taken care of and were living with the elderly persons concerned, it did not make sense to require them to keep a record of the number of hours of care-giving. It would also be difficult for the Administration to verify the correctness of such records. He said that as long as the persons were playing the role of carers, they should be eligible for the allowance.

Follow-up action

73. Expressing concern that the number of eligible carers might be far below the targeted number because of the rigid criteria of the Pilot Scheme,

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Dr Fernando CHEUNG suggested that the Administration should conduct an early review of the Pilot Scheme, say, three months after its implementation. The Panel should then discuss the subject matter again. Echoing that the Panel should follow up the matter, Mr LEUNG Yiu-chung requested the Administration to provide a paper incorporating the Administration's response to members' views on the Pilot Scheme to facilitate the Panel's discussion later.

74. PS(LW) responded that the Administration would submit the proposed Pilot Scheme for consideration by the CCF Task Force under the Commission on Poverty ("CoP") in March 2014. Subject to the views of the CCF Task Force, the Administration would put the proposal to CoP for endorsement, with a view to launching the Pilot Scheme by the end of the second quarter of 2014. If the Administration were to come back to the Panel, the implementation schedule might be affected. The Administration would relay members' views to the CCF Task Force.

75. The Chairman said that the efforts of carers gave a positive message of caring for the elderly to the community. She opined that the Administration had included unnecessary restrictions in the Pilot Scheme. She called on the Administration to improve the Pilot Scheme taking into account members' views, and provide the Panel with a copy of the paper on the pilot scheme to be submitted by the CCF Task Force to CoP.

Admin

(Post-meeting note: The Chinese version of the paper submitted by the CCF Task Force to CoP on the Pilot Scheme was issued to members on 25 March 2014 vide LC Paper No. CB(2)1160/13-14(01)).

V. Any other business

76. There being no other business, the meeting ended at 12:53 pm.